

You Take the Hard Road . . . and I'll Take the Soft Road

Paved paths near greens are simply a fact of life at some heavily played courses. Cover asphalt with strips of PVC matting to soften paved cart paths located adjacent to greens.

BY BOB VAVREK

Love 'em or hate 'em, motorized carts are an integral part of American golf. Unlike golfers overseas, many Americans won't play unless they can ride. In fact, a fair number of relatively new resort courses were designed to be played from a cart and are practically impossible to walk. In many ways, carts can be both an asset and a detriment to the course.

Cart rentals provide a significant percentage of the cash flow necessary to maintain courses at a level that meets the ever-increasing expectations of today's golfers. Green fees and dues at most courses would need to be increased significantly without cart revenues.

However, the wear and compaction of turf caused by concentrated cart traffic will always have a negative effect on playing conditions. All golf shots are directed toward the greens, so the turf adjacent to greens and approaches suffers the most from cart traffic damage. Consequently, cart paths are often employed near green complexes to keep traffic away from these prime areas of play.

Place the path too far away from the putting surface and golfers will be tempted to drive across the turf between the path and green. Place the



The need for paved cart paths is obvious at heavily played golf courses that have a limited ability to accommodate walkers.

path too close to the green and the path will affect a considerable amount of play. A slightly errant shot to the green that bounces off the path and onto an adjacent hole, or worse, bounces out of bounds or into a hazard, will generally be accompanied by a strongly worded complaint to the grounds staff.

The green complexes of most old classic courses were not designed to accommodate cart paths. Multiple green and tee complexes are often found in close proximity to each other. It may be necessary to place the path very close to a green at old courses that exist on limited acreage or courses that have become landlocked by adjacent development. This turf tip discusses a way for paved cart paths and greens to coexist in close proximity.

An option employed at some courses is to construct the cart path near greens from a material that can absorb the energy of a shot better than asphalt or concrete. Paths made from gravel or wood chips are more yielding than a hard surface. However, these materials are susceptible to displacement or rutting from erosion or traffic. Gravel and wood chip paths need to be repaired frequently to maintain a level surface.

Mike Jones, CGCS, superintendent of the Lochmoor Club (Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich.) softens the cart paths near greens by covering the pavement with poly extruded matting. The green PVC mat absorbs the impact of a golf ball and blends in well with the surrounding turf. The matting is available from Eagle One products (<http://eagleonegolf.com>) or directly from the manufacturer (<http://www.pemsurface.com>) in 6-foot by 25-foot rolls.

Golf cart operators tend to stop abruptly, and the process of locking up the tires on a moving cart can quickly detach a poorly applied cover from the path. The key to success is the installation process that firmly binds the mat to the asphalt.

Asphalt is, by far, the most common material used for cart path pavement in the North. Fresh asphalt contains petroleum-based oils that need to volatilize before it can be sealed or treated with the adhesives used to attach a mat to the path. A new path should age for a year before attempting this procedure.

The 6-ft.-wide mat is cut into 8-ft.-long pieces and installed perpendicu-

prepare the surface for the adhesive. Allow time for the path to dry. The best success is realized using a combination of the GE 1800 silicon adhesive recommended by the manufacturer of the matting and Roberts Premium Indoor/Outdoor Carpet Adhesive 6700 (<http://www.robertsconsolidated.com>).

The Roberts mastic is spread on the asphalt using a notched trowel adjacent

other heavy equipment will certainly damage the mat as well as the pavement.

If the intent is to minimize the bounce of a golf ball, then the matting does its job very well. Golfers are never quiet about the annoyance of seeing a cart path in play, particularly a path located very close to a green. The green color of the mat blends in with the adjacent turf and may reduce or



Unrestricted cart traffic can cause considerable injury to turf during wet weather. A well-designed paved surface can accommodate carts when the soils are saturated from rain, flood, springs/seeps, and poor drainage.

larly to the direction of the path. Unfortunately, there will be a seam across the path every 6 feet. A seam sealer is available from the supplier, and taking the time to join the seams is well worth the effort, especially where carts are most likely to stop and start. On the other hand, the smaller pieces of mat are easier to handle and attach to the pavement compared to a single long strip of material installed parallel to the direction of the path. Furthermore, a 6-foot-wide strip of matting would not entirely cover the 8-foot-wide paths that are commonly seen on golf courses.

You must begin with a clean, dry surface. A pressure washer is ideal to

to a bead of the silicone adhesive. The process is repeated alternating mastic (8 inches to 10 inches wide) and silicone adhesive (6-inch squiggle) across the path. A strip of the mat is placed over the adhesive. A sheet of plywood is placed over the mat and a vibratory plate compactor is operated over the plywood to firmly press the matting into the adhesive. Allow at least one day for the adhesive to cure and the path is ready for traffic.

It's difficult to predict the life span of the PVC mat because it has been available for only 10 years. Obviously, the mat will last longer if the paths accommodate nothing heavier than cart traffic. Operating large trucks or

eliminate the need to hide the path from view using berms or landscaping.

On a final note, the same process can be useful for covering a paved path located along a steep slope. The matting improves traction across wet pavement for golfers who walk or ride. PVC mats on a cart path, however, should never be considered a substitute for using common sense when operating carts across the course during wet weather.

BOB VAVREK's path takes him to golf courses in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota for Turf Advisory Service visits throughout the season.